

CENTENNIAL PARK

Centennial Park is made up of 42 acres of woodland and meadow. Hiking and nature trails link it to a trail system that extends from the Town Forest at Cedar Street to the Fuller Brook Pathway System at Maugus Avenue. The park was purchased in 1980 from the Sisters of Charity in celebration of the Town's Centennial. Residents of Wellesley helped to raise the funds necessary for this acquisition and continue their help and support through the Friends of Centennial Park. The entrance, which looks like a private drive, is off Oakland Street, marked by a large wooden sign.

Centennial Park is maintained by the DPW's Park and Tree Division in accordance with policies established by the Natural Resources Commission. This policy has three objectives. The first is to provide a recreational opportunity for Town residents of all ages: birdwatching, hiking, jogging, cross-country skiing, fishing, photography and picnicking.

The second objective is the preservation of the park's natural resources. The park has woodlands and meadows as well as a pond. All three are important in maintaining a diversity of wildlife. Without a management program, however, the meadows and pond would be lost due to the process of succession. This land was once cleared for agriculture. When farming stopped, grasses and shrubs grew up. Mowing keeps the meadow in an early successional stage by preventing seedlings from becoming established. To preserve wildlife habitat, meadows are never all mowed in a single year.

Crownvetch is an attractive but aggressive invader which was introduced by an abutter to control erosion of the steep slopes. The Crownvetch has now spread into the meadows by birds and animals. Poison Ivy, whose seeds are valuable bird food, is controlled along paths. In season, blackberries are abundant and available for the picking.

Bezanson Pond, named for Wellesley's long-time Town Engineer, also needs maintenance. It must be cleared of silt and leaves that interfere with the flow of water. The shrubs at the pond's edge help to catch silt before it reaches the water, but can take over the pond, changing it to marsh and wooded swamp. The pond provides a home for many species. It flows by way of Academy Brook to Rosemary Brook and Longfellow Pond. The Rosemary Brook watershed supplies much of the Town's well water.

The third objective is to educate. The diversity of plant and animal life make it an excellent place to observe natural processes. The meadows north and south of the entrance are made up primarily of tall grasses, a good home for pheasants. Wildflowers are especially abundant in the meadow on the opposite side of the pond. Many species of birds can be seen, including redtailed hawk, bobwhite, great horned owl, mourning dove, barn swallow, mockingbird and red-winged blackbird. Small mammals such as red fox, skunk, rabbit and raccoon have also been observed.

Soil Conditions vary through the park. A glacial esker is located to the south of the pond. This is a ridge of sand and gravel that was deposited by streams of melt water which flowed under the glacial ice. The esker is well drained, making it suitable for growth of Pitch Pine, White Pine and Red Cedar. Hemlocks favor cooler areas and therefore are found on the north side of the esker. Red Oak grows on the upper slopes of Maugus Hill. Other trees and shrubs found in Centennial Park include Wild Cherry, Birch, Aspen, Maple, Ash, Blueberry, Euonymus, Buckthorn and Blackberry.